ARAMBE FLAME

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EDITORIAL POLICY

The HARAMBEE FLAME is the monthly newsletter of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization(Nebraska State Pen chapter). Ours is a pan-Africanist publication, meaning that we view all people of African descent as one African people, having certain basic interests in common. Also, the HARAMBEE FLAME attempts to be Africentric, in that, through study of the history, cultures, and traditional values of African people, we seek to have and cultivate an African way of looking at things.

The main purposes of the HARAMBEE FLAME are to stimulate and inform. We list "stimulate" first because, more than anything else, we want our readers to be moved to question their/your own ideas, lives, and the circumstances in which we live and to challenge those things that must be challenged in order for us to move from a condition of mental and spiritual servitude and physical dependence upon Caucasian institutions to a state of collective self-determination. Toward this purpose, we present commentaries, poems, etc. These do not necessarily represent the official positions of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization.

The HARAMBEE FLAME provides information because wise people want to know what's going on and because certain kinds of information can stimulate the mind, inspire people to want to act, and influence them to pursue proper understanding so that the actions they take will be as effective as possible. The main vehicle we use to provide information is our "From Other Sources" feature in which we make an effort to provide news about the problems we African people are confronted by and the steps we are taking to resolve them. In this feature, we try to provide coverage of the activities of African people and developments affecting us in the U.S., the nations of Africa, and elsewhere. In "Commentary," we offer analysis of and views about current events and developments.

We encourage you to send your comments, essays, poems, etc. to HARAMBEE FLAME; Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization; P.O. Box 2500; Lincoln, NE.; 68542-2500.

are that: the U.S. political economic system is legitimate and just, overall; that cops are both guardians of that system and ourselves; that crime has become so pervasive and violent that any means cops use to put criminals away are justified.

The idea that the political/economic system of this country is legitimate is one that's not difficult for cop shows to get across, because there is so little public discourse that challenges this idea. But the second and third ideas are a tougher sell, for African male adolescent viewers, in particular. Young African males, while accepting the fact that cops are guardians of "the system," tend to be not so quick to accept the absurd idea that cops, as an institution, can both be guardians of that system and guardians of them. Afterall, many of them correctly see "the system" for what it is--an enemy of African people. And because many of these youth see "the system" as an enemy, they may view breaking the law as a blow against "the system." Thus, these same youth may not see the putting away of those who break the laws as in their interests. So a cop show that has targeted African male youth has to manipulate them into identifying with cops.

One of the primary methods cop shows use to effect this manipulation is to offer to viewers a villainous character who does things so vile that viewers, who might share with the character an African heritage, will **feel** anger toward him and want him to be taken down. This character, then, becomes an enemy, so much so that viewers who may see **cops** as enemies are ready to identify with them as they take the villain down.

But it isn't enough simply to turn an African male adolescent against someone who looks like him. That is an indirect way of getting him to identify with cops. A direct way is to offer to the viewer a cop who is African, who talks and dresses slick, and who operates before a "backdrop" of a slick soundtrack. A primary example of this is "New York Undercover." Some years ago, "Miami Vice" fit the bill. Presented in this fashion, the African cop's police function can be pushed to the rear, in the mind of the African male youth, by his hip image. The cop becomes a "homeboy." In addition, this cop is armed. The young African male, having a sense of

his own **powerlessness**, identifies with the gun as a symbol of power. And the hip image of the African cop is further enhanced by his hooking up with women who look and dress "fly."

If a cop show is successful in getting people to watch it, to identify with its main characters, etc., it has an impact that has clear social implications. An African male youth, and other fans of cop shows, get accustomed to identifying with the notion of cops being on their side in fantasy and may wind up dropping dimes on their partners, in **reality.**

But while these cop shows perpetuate the ideas of the political/economic system being legitimate, the cops being our guardians, etc., they also perpetuate the idea that cash and the things cash can buy give a person juice and that it is this **cash**-generated juice which is of **the** importance. So while cop shows influence their viewers to accept cops and identify with them, the more flashy of them also serve the apparently contradictory function of encouraging those who have little materially to go after the glitz and flash that these same shows hype in order to attract viewers.

So, on one hand, with the "bad guys" on cop shows almost always getting caught and/or taken out the game altogether, there is the message that crime doesn't pay. On the other hand, with the glamourizing of the fast life that is so characteristic of cop shows, as well as the "thrill of the chase," there is another message, intended or not--"Go ahead, Bro., and get paid." And why not? Prisons are a growth industry.

-Editor

FROM OTHER SOURCES

Rappers Call For Peace

"Major rap artists joined with the leader of the Nation of Islam April 3 and pledged to end their feuding, work for peace and promote music that uplifts and focuses on saving lives.

"'The East and the West have come together. They have agreed, and we have agreed, in principle, that as of this day, all the insults that have been heaped on one by the other will cease and each have forgiven each other', said the Hon. Louis Farrakhan, during a press conference at Salaam restaurant...

"The artists agreed to a hip-hop peace tour and to collaborate on an album dedicated to Shakur and Notorious B.I.G. The album will promote unity, peace, atonement, reconciliation and responsibility in the Black community...

"The minister and the rappers were joined by longtime Pan-African leader Kwame Toure(formerly known as Stokeley Carmichael), Min. Benjamin Muhammad(formerly the Rev. Benjamin Chavis) and Rev. James Bevel, a former strategist for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

"'There must be a clean-up in the cultural arena..If we feed the people filth, then we cannot expect the people to be anything but unclean. 'But if we feed the people that which is uplifting, then we can expect..a good wholesome people. This is what we have decided to do and this is what we have decided to be'..."

-from "Rappers Join Farrakhan In Call For Peace, Unity," pages 3 and 32, April 19 NEW YORK AMSTERDAM NEWS(N.Y., N.Y.)

Foul Play In Military Sex Scandal

"Racism may have been a factor not only in the selective prosecution of Black Army drill sergeants on sexual harassment charges, it may have been a factor in whose complaints were even investigated. This is the implication of shocking new

information learned by members of the Congressional Black Caucus(CBC) when they met with Army Secretary Togo West.

"'One of the things that we have learned, that I don't think Secretary West was even aware of', CBC member Elijah Cummings(D-Md.) told reporters following their meeting with the Army leader April 9, 'is that when these people were calling in from all over the world complaining(about sexual harassment by superior officers), the number one question that was asked was: Are you Black, or are you White? We felt that was totally irrelevant'.

"Christine Allen Price is a Black Army veteran...She served in Saudi Arabia in November 1990, just before the outbreak of and during the Persian Gulf War.

"While stationed in the Arabian desert, Ms. Price says she was first sexually harassed by the Black Sergeant Major of her unit--B Battery of the 43rd Air Defense Artillery battalion, stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas--and then raped by her white chaplain when she complained about her treatment at the hands of the non-commissioned officer.

"No disciplinary action has been taken against either man she told The Final Call, and her charges may have been simply swept under the rug...

"Forcible rape offenses are committed by members of the Army at a rate 40 percent to 50 percent higher than in the general population, according to a report from Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY). Additionally, in 1995 more than 18 percent of Army personnel actually convicted of serious sexual assault received no prison time for their crime, she told reporters April 8...

"'We've asked the Secretary to provide the CBC with a detailed explanation of the training, background and qualifications of all investigators, and include with that a breakdown of the number of women, Blacks and other minorities who are part of the criminal investigative division', Rep. Cummings said. So far, eight of 11 drill instructors charged with sexual misconduct are Black. Most of the complaining victims are white...

and to end the preferential treatment of white workers...

-from "Black Nursing Home Workers Challenge White Bosses And Big Corporations," pages H and K, Nov.-Feb. THE BURNING SPEAK(St. Petersburg, FL.)

Major Health Threats To Africans In U.S.

..."By this time next year,...more than a quarter million African Americans...will die from the 10 biggest killers of Blacks of all ages--heart disease, cancer, stroke, AIDS, accidents, homicide, diabetes, pneumonia and influenza, chronic pulmonary diseases such as asthma and bronchitis, and infant mortality...

"The top killers vary by gender and by age. For young African-Americans(ages 25-44), the leading threat remains AIDS, a disease this group contracts four times more often thaN Whites, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. And for Blacks in their late teens to early 20s, the biggest danger is homicide--often at the hands of another African-American...A growing threat to young African-Americans, officials say, is suicide. That act ranks among the CDC's Top 10 major killers of Blacks from their teens to mid-40s...

"Chicago internist Dr. Fred Daniels believes that ignorance about what's needed to maintain health is one of the greatest barriers to preventing major diseases in Blacks. 'Most patients still feel that to go to the doctor something has to be wrong', says Dr. Daniels, whose caseload is 99 percent Black.

"Like Dr. Daniels, other experts suggest that regular physical examinations and honest communication with a doctor could reduce the number of deaths by diseases Blacks face...

"But Gloria Bonner says a lot of the confusion is due to a legacy of racism by the medical community. Echoes of the Tuskegee Experiment...and other horror stories still haunt some people's minds..."

-from "The 10 Biggest Killers of Blacks," pages 124, 126, 128, 130, March EBONY Magazine(Chicago, IL.)

-from "We Charge Genocide: Drive On For Million Signatures," pages 8 and 44, April 26 NY AMSTERDAM NEWS

Europeans Still Holding Africans' Land In Azania("So. Africa")

'Dr. Jaiyesmi-Njobe [is] senior research manager for the Land and Agriculture Policy Center, a Johannesburg-based land-reform group originally called the Land Commission. After apartheid, the Commission emerged with a new name and a new aim: to give back land to a people who had been without it for over 50 years under apartheid.

'Three years after apartheid, Blacks have less than 10 percent of that land back, according to figures from the African National Congress Department of Land Affairs...White land ownership, since apartheid, is virtually the same with white farmers owning 87 percent of the land.

'The many critics of the land reform program speak of the slowness to redustribute the vast land mass, citing the failure of the Land Reform Pilot Programs(LRPP), which are responsible for the resettlement of South Africans...

''Current land reform policy is a willing buyer, willing seller one. So the white people who now own and control the land have to be willing to sell the land to the government. The government then provides subsidies of $37,000 in the form of grants. That money is then used to assist those who want access to land', Dr. Jaiyesimi-Njobe explained.

The problem is not the unwillingness of the sellers to give up land, but the high price being asked for that land. The $37,000 distributed per family follows no particular definition of what 'family' means. So the money may have been spread too far, critics of the pace of land reform argue...

The unspoken issues lie in the vision held of South Africa by the international community, and how that vision is affecting land policy. Dr. Jaiyesimi-Njobe believes the international community views South Africa and her undeniable geographic beauty as a reserve for nature and a playground for tourists. The purpose of land ownership

is no longer about addressing the needs of the people but enjoying economic rewards gained from an industry: tourism...

"The solution, some say, lies in small scale farming...Ms. Thswa-Thathe of the Rural Women's Movement cites the absence of those directly affected by land issues from the discussion as the major cause of land redistribution problems. Therefor, funds do not reach relevant areas, she says..."

-from "Land Reform In South Africa Still Sought," pages 12 and 17, May 6 THE FINAL CALL

African Tribal System And Sense Of Community

..."In Rumu-iji, a village in the Ikwerre tribe of Nigeria, a child born at 5 p.m. begins to receive instruction at about 5:20 p.m. The instruction, which comes in the form of a nursery rhyme, is delivered by women, who sing and clap their hands to celebrate the child's birth.

"The women sing: 'When your mother speaks, listen. When your father speaks, listen. Nighttime is playtime. But when your mother speaks, listen. And when your father speaks, listen'...

"The purpose here, I later realized, is the upkeep of the tradition, as well as the tribe. A tribe survives the test of time by continually passing information from one generation to the next. And so a story told to a child today is like a seed planted on fertile soil. The day it will blossom is anybody's guess, but the tribe has faith that it will blossom, and that the child will eventually grow up to be a proud member of the tribe...

"In many parts of Africa, villages have a sense of community that is the lifeblood of all their members...

"...in a typical African tribal system there are checks and balances. These checks and balances are the nuts and bolts of the system. There are those who govern the tribe

Congo President Calls For African Unity

"President Laurent Kabila of the Democratic Republic of Congo recently denounced what he called the conspiracy against African countries. 'At present, there is a big intoxication campaign in the world against African countries wishing to remain sovereign', he said April 18.

"Mr. Kabila, speaking to the Pan African News Agency here, where he was on an official visit, said...'We are not going to be developed by these forces which are working for our division so as to better exploit us', he said. 'We are continuing the struggle against injustice and against the domination and humiliation of our peoples and African leaders must not only know this but they should also evolve a joint strategy'...

"Libya and the Republic of Congo also signed an economic, technical, scientific and cultural cooperation agreement before President Kabila's departure that night.

"During his visit, Mr. Kabila discussed the situation in Africa, and the Great Lakes region in particular, with Col. Ghadafi. The two leaders discussed Africa's debt burden, the effects of globalization on the continent, Afro-Arab cooperation, the stability and security of Africa and ways of resolving the continent's conflicts, officials said..."

-from "Congo Leader: Africa Unity Needed To Fight Imperialism," page 3, April 28 THE FINAL CALL(Chicago, IL.)

Addressing Myths About Africa

"Sub-Saharan Africa has 44 percent of the world's 4.4. billion acres of uncultivated arable land. Even with its comparatively high estimated population-growth rates, Africa is second only to Latin America and the Caribbean in the amount of available productive land per capita. One study shows that if all Africa's land available for farming were put to use under optimal conditions, the continent's potential grain yields would be 27 percent higher than yields in Europe and 21 percent higher than central North America.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Sisters Of LaBelle Afrique Foundation Visit Prison Chapter Of Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization

On Tuesday, April 15th., three members of the Omaha-based Labelle Afrique Foundation attended the meeting of our chapter of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization. The African women, two of U.S. birth and one from Benin in West Africa, shared with us information about the founding of their organization, its objectives, and their motivations, and so forth.

Before the Sisters gave their presentation, five members of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization read original poems in tribute to African women. We had decided, well in advance of the meeting, to do this as a way of welcoming the Sisters. Moreover, we made it plain that we do not differentiate between African people on the basis of where a person of African ancestry happens to have been born.

In speaking of the activities and objectives of the Labelle Afrique(beautiful Africa) Foundation, the Sisters spoke of their desire to see a growth in spiritual unity between African people born in the U.S. and African people from the Motherland and described fashion shows(featuring traditional African dress and African-inspired dress) and other cultural performances that the Foundation puts on. These functions, the Sisters explained, not only serve the purpose of familiarizing African people of U.S. birth with the traditional cultures from our Motherland, but also raise money for the Foundation's scholarship program. The scholarships are used for the purpose of sending U.S.-born African students from the Omaha area to Africa for a couple of weeks during the summer.

In addition to talking about the Labelle Afrique Foundation, the Sisters exhibited both men's and women's garments from nations of West Africa and gave us information and insights regarding the symbolism of certain designs and social functions served by various types of traditional garments.

The meeting was viewed, by both our members and the Sisters of the Foundation as a kind of "homecoming," a crossing of bridges both between Africa and its diaspora and between the

so-called "free world" and the joint.

African Woman In Tight Race For Omaha Mayoral Seat

"For the second time in two-and-a-half years, Omaha City Councilwoman Brenda Council will challenge Hal Daub for the job of running Nebraska's largest city. In a tight, three-way race for mayor, Council finished a mere 280 votes behind Daub in the April 1 city primary, capturing 39.7 percent of the vote to Daub's 40 percent. The third candidate, Lou Lamberty, who has since endorsed Council, collected 20.3 percent.

"Council first ran against Daub in a December 1994 special election to choose a replacement to complete the unexpired term of Mayor P.J. Morgan, who had resigned. Daub went on to win that election by a comfortable 57 to 43 percent margin. His performance as mayor, however, has been every bit as controversial and tempestuous as his eight-year tenure in Congress representing the 2nd Congressional District, and his approval ratings are lower than would ordinarily be expected for an incumbent...

"A practicing attorney, Council previously served on the Omaha School Board for 12 years prior to her election to the City Council..." (from the April '97 edition of Nebraska Report)

The city of Omaha, which is Nebraska's largest and holds an overall population of around 450,000, has an African population which comprises about 10-12 percent of the overall number. Because of the relatively small number of Africans in Omaha, Council has to be able to appeal, not only to Africans and other people of color in the city, but to Caucasians as well. In recent weeks, the Daub camp has turned up the heat, in what had been a comparatively civil campaign, by pulling out all the stops in portraying Brenda Council as "soft on crime." The Sister is on record as being opposed to the death penalty, which has been made an issue, despite the fact that city government is not empowered to impose the death penalty. In addition, Daub has made an issue of the fact that Council had written a letter four years ago to the Nebraska Board of Pardons, urging that body to consider granting a commutation of sentence to Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we

Langa, a former Black Panther who is serving a life sentence for his alleged involvement in the 1970 bomb-killing of an Omaha cop.

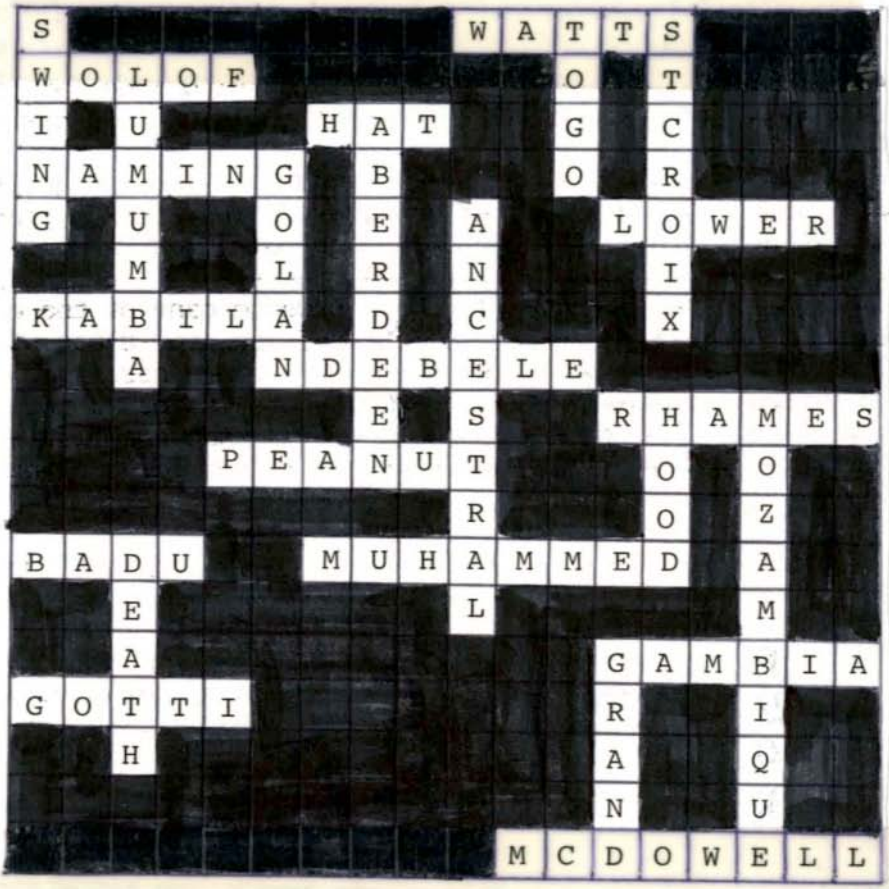
On Monday, April 28th., Brenda Council held a press conferene in which she accused the current mayor of promoting controversy concerning her letter to the Board of Pardons in order to gain political advantage. She also criticized him for using the pain of the deceased cop's family members for the same purpose. Council was joined at the conference by the present governor of Nebraska and other current and former big-time Democratic office-holders. Because of the fact that Brenda Council is African and holds views that are significantly different from the prevalent neo-conservatism that characterizes Democratic Party politics, the show of support by Caucasian "heavy hitters" from the Party surprised a lot of people in Omaha's African community. Some observers have suggested that this public show of support represents something less than actual support for Council, but more, a desire by the state Democratic Party apparatus to put the mayoral office of the state's largest city into Democratic hands. These observers point most readily to the governor's recent defeat in his bid for the U.S. Senate seat left vacant by Democrat, J.J. Exon.

Musicians Bring African-American Classical Music("Jazz") To Nebraska State Prison

On April 14th., thanks to the cooperation of Mike Carroll of the University of Nebraska at Omaha Goodrich Scholarship Program, prisoners here experienced an excellent performance by musicians Salim Washington, Keith Owens, Steve Gomez, and Dan Maca. Salim is a saxophonist and has led a group in Roxbury, Massachusetts for a number of years. He also teaches courses in Afro-American studies at Harvard University. Guitarist Keith Owens is from the Detroit area, is a columnist for Detroit Free Press, and is working with a publisher on a series of children's books. Steve Gomez and Dan Maca are Omaha musicians who, playing drums and bass, joined up with Salim and Keith for their performance here.

Following a recognition of African musicians who have passed

PUZZLE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Musicians...

into the realm of our ancestors, the quartet treated us to pieces by Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane, Duke Ellington, and Eddie Harris. The performance brought us to our feet several times and was a spiritually uplifting experience. Funding for the appearance was provided by the Nebraska Arts Council and the prison's A & R Committee.

HARAMBEE AFRIKAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION CREED

Together we seek to know that which is us, to expand our collective consciousness of who we are and whence we come. We exalt in the fact that Afrikans are beautiful in our own right, rather than at the expense of any other group of people. And in the true spirit of the Swahili word, "harambee," we promote the idea that cultural awareness is germane to human growth.

NGUZO SABA(Seven Principles)

Umoja - Unity

Kujichagulia - Self-determination

Ujima - Collective work & responsibility

Ujamaa - Cooperative economics

Nia - Purpose

Kuumba - Creativity

Imani - Faith